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RUEHDM/AMEMBASSY DAMASCUS PRIORITY 5467
RUEHLO/AMEMBASSY LONDON PRIORITY 2315
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RUEHTU/AMEMBASSY TUNIS PRIORITY 5771
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RUEHJI/AMCONSUL JEDDAH PRIORITY 0600
RUEHJM/AMCONSUL JERUSALEM PRIORITY 0886
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RHMFISS/COMSOCEUR VAIHINGEN GE PRIORITY
RHMFIUU/COMSIXTHFLT PRIORITY

UNCLAS TEL AVIV 002663

STATE FOR NEA, NEA/IPA, NEA/PPD

WHITE HOUSE FOR PRESS OFFICE, SIT ROOM
NSC FOR NEA STAFF

SECDEF WASHDC FOR USDP/ASD-PA/ASD-ISA
HQ USAF FOR XOX
DA WASHDC FOR SASA
JOINT STAFF WASHDC FOR PA
CDR USCENTCOM MACDILL AFB FL FOR POLAD/USIA ADVISOR
COMSOCEUR VAIHINGEN GE FOR PAO/POLAD
COMSIXTHFLT FOR 019

JERUSALEM ALSO ICD
LONDON ALSO FOR HKANONA AND POL
PARIS ALSO FOR POL
ROME FOR MFO

SIPDIS
E.O. 12958: N/A
TAGS: [OPRC](#) [KMDR](#) [IS](#)

SUBJECT: ISRAEL MEDIA REACTION

SUBJECTS COVERED IN THIS REPORT:

[¶1.](#) Aftermath of Mumbai Terror Attacks

[¶2.](#) Mideast

Key stories in the media:

The media reported that an IDF soldier lost a leg on Friday in a mortar attack from Gaza on his base. The Jerusalem Post reported that he is no longer at risk of losing the other leg. Israel Radio

reported that Egypt has asked Hamas to stop the mortar fire in order to keep the Gaza-Israel crossings open.

Maariv reported that associates of Labor Chairman Ehud Barak and other political figures are trying to convince him to offer Kadima a union before the party primaries. However, Barak declined the proposal, believing that Labor will gain 13 Knesset seats in the general elections. Yesterday The Jerusalem Post reported that on Saturday Vice PM Haim Ramon called on PM Olmert to suspend himself.

The Jerusalem Post reported that the head of a ZAKA -- humanitarian voluntary organization responding to tragic incidents in Israel -- team in Mumbai told the daily yesterday that the Indian commando raid launched to save the lives of Jewish and Israeli hostages at the city's Chabad House may have inadvertently ended the lives of one or more of the hostages.

Major media reported that President-elect Barack Obama is set to name Sen. Hillary Clinton secretary of state today.

Major media reported that yesterday the cabinet approved the release of 250 Palestinian prisoners as a goodwill gesture toward Palestinian President Mahmoud Abbas. Yediot and Maariv quoted Gilad Shalit's family as saying that any release of Palestinian prisoners that is not part of a deal harms efforts to release Gilad.

The leading Internet news service Ynet reported that this morning the Israel Navy prevented a Libyan boat from reaching Gaza.

The Jerusalem Post reported that, in an unusual development, the military commander of Judea and Samaria [i.e. the West Bank] has petitioned the High Court of Justice, asking it to reject a decision by a military appeals court that Jews who had spent 10 years cultivating land owned by Palestinians were legally entitled to possess it.

HaQaretz reported that Israeli officials are deeply concerned over an internal European Union document outlining the EU's plans for advancing an Israeli-Palestinian deal in 2009. It calls for increased pressure on Israel to reopen Palestinian institutions in Jerusalem, including the Orient House, which formerly served as the PA's headquarters in the city. The document, a copy of which was obtained by HaQaretz, was written by the French Foreign Ministry, as France currently occupies the EU's rotating presidency. It is slated to be discussed next week at a meeting of the EU's foreign ministers, and Israel is trying to get various elements changed before then. Titled "The EU Action Strategy for Peace in the Middle East: The Way Forward," the document proposes various steps the EU should take in 2009 on both the Palestinian and the Syrian tracks, with emphasis on the former. However, its proposals are liable to result in a clash with whatever new government Israelis elect in February, whether headed by Tzipi Livni or Benjamin Netanyahu.

All media reported that the Finance Ministry is at odds with PM Ehud Olmert regarding the emergency economic plan. HaQaretz reported that yesterday four top treasury officials accused two top advisers to Prime Minister Ehud Olmert of acting illegally by trying to circumvent Finance Ministry authority and creating their own emergency economic plan, which goes further than the treasury's proposed plan. HaQaretz views this as a strike by Finance Minister Roni Bar-On at Olmert, who for many years was considered a close friend.

The Jerusalem Post reported that the governments of Israel and the U.S. will announce four joint projects in the field of an alternative energy at the Eilat-Eilot international renewable energy conference in February. The projects will be financed under the auspices of the U.S.-Israel Energy Cooperation Act.

Yediot reported that a report issued by an international energy company recommends building a nuclear power station in Israel as the cheapest and best solution for the country.

Israel Hayom cited the results of a poll conducted yesterday by New Wave Research, showing the Israeli voter intentions (in Knesset seats; figures in brackets show the current Knesset seats):
Likud: 35 (12); Kadima: 26 (29); Shas: 10 (12); Arab parties: 10 (10); Yisrael Beiteinu: 10 (11); Labor Party: 7 (19); Meretz: 7 (5);

the Jewish Home 5 (6); United Torah Judaism: 5 (6); Green Party: 2 (0).

The right-wing bloc would garner 65 Knesset seats and the leftwing bloc 55.

I1. Aftermath of Mumbai Terror Attacks:

Summary:

Columnist and former intelligence officer Amos Gilboa wrote in the popular, pluralist Maariv: QThe Obama administration will have to adapt its plans to reality, not the other way around.

Military correspondent Amos Harel wrote on page one of the independent, left-leaning HaQaretz: QThe interest shown by global jihad organizations in Israelis and Jews as targets is not new. Now it is also clear that even when the background to their attacks is apparently a regional conflict with no connection to us (India and Pakistan), the Islamic element turns Israelis and Jews into secondary targets for terrorists.

Block Quotes:

I1. "ObamaQs Reception"

Columnist and former intelligence officer Amos Gilboa wrote in the popular, pluralist Maariv (12/1): QThe Mumbai terror has nothing to do with the U.S. elections, because it was planned many months before the elections and before the outbreak of the global economic crisis. But it does have a direct implication on the Obama administration at various levels, one of which is the threat of radical Islamic terror.... Obama and his entourage will understand very fast that Bush wasnQt totally ignorant and that America is still in the midst of a war against Islamic global terrorism. In other words, the Obama administration will have to adapt its plans to reality, not the other way around. Who knows what surprise global Jihad is preparing for Obama as he enters office.

II. "Israel Is on the Map"

Military correspondent Amos Harel wrote on page one of the independent, left-leaning HaQaretz (12/1): QIt's hard to judge whether Hezbollah, Hamas, or the global jihad groups (Al-Qaida derivatives) are capable of carrying out something similar to the Mumbai attacks] within Israel, which currently seems slightly better prepared than India to combat such an attack. Still, from now on, that is the extreme scenario that must be taken into consideration.... Anti-terror experts say that just securing one floor of a hotel where terrorists are holding hostages would take an entire unit. Even Israel does not have enough units capable of handling a few hostage-taking and other attacks simultaneously.... The interest shown by global jihad organizations in Israelis and Jews as targets is not new. Now it is also clear that even when the background to their attacks is apparently a regional conflict with no connection to us (India and Pakistan), the Islamic element turns Israelis and Jews into secondary targets for terrorists. Israel's anti-terrorism headquarters is already thinking about increasing security at hundreds of Jewish institutions around the world.

I2. Mideast:

Summary:

Former Meretz leader Dr. Yossi Beilin wrote in the independent Israel Hayom: QLeaving all these settlements in place and disregarding the Israeli Roadmap commitment constitutes the harshest damage to Abbas and his supporters. This week's prisoner release will not make up for it.

Liberal op-ed writer Yael Paz-Melamed commented in the popular, pluralist Maariv: QThe Labor Party and its agenda are still important for Israeli society.... Tomorrow, the Labor Party is holding its primary.... Give it another chance. Give us another chance too.

Block Quotes:

II. "Releasing Prisoners Is Not Enough"

Former Meretz leader Dr. Yossi Beilin wrote in the independent Israel Hayom (12/1): QThe release of prisoners is a very central topic on the Palestinian agenda, and there is significance even to the release of 250 from over 10,000 prisoners, but it is far from being dramatic. Olmert's government, which is limping toward the end of its term, promised from its first day to implement the Sasson report, and evacuate-at the very least-the unauthorized settlement outposts, those established by deceit, those that even the right wing announces repeatedly that their existence should not be supported, because unlawful construction should not be accepted. Nothing has happened. Leaving all these settlements in place and disregarding the Israeli Roadmap commitment constitutes the harshest damage to Abbas and his supporters. This week's prisoner release will not make up for it.

II. "It Deserves another Chance"

Liberal op-ed writer Yael Paz-Melamed commented in the popular, pluralist Maariv (12/1): QSince the polls have shown that [the Labor Party] is sinking fast, the dam has burst.... Barak and the Labor Party have earned some of this treatment fair and square, and they can only criticize themselves.... The Labor Party and its agenda are still important for Israeli society....

It is true that Ehud Barak elicits antagonism, he is a man who projects a certain detachment from reality, but he is still the person who stands between us and a large invasion of Gaza, which will cause many casualties on both sides, and only produce more salvos of Qassam rockets and Katyusha rockets. And this is only one example. Tomorrow, the Labor Party is holding its primary. If it comes out of it with a fresh list, with all the good people it has, it can certainly be considered a legitimate and important social-democratic party, and not a battered and bleeding body. Give it another chance. Give us another chance too.

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